Jordan Glen School & Summer Camp to Host JCNCF Israeli Independence Day Celebration

By Virginia Brissette Hirshik
JCNCF Executive Director

It seems like just yesterday that our community gathered at the Florida Museum of Natural History to celebrate Israel’s 60th Birthday and here we are about to mark the 68th! Lucky for us, Israel just keeps getting better with time and we never get tired of celebrating her!

On Sunday, May 15, commemorate Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day) and celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut (Independence Day) with a “journey to the Jordan.” JCNCF is partnering with Jordan Glen School and Summer Camp for this year’s Israeli Independence Day gathering. The trip to Jordan Glen in Archer is an easy 20-minute drive and it’s worth it! Jordan Glen School and Summer Camp is a beautiful setting where glorious peacocks and chickens roam through the trees.

Israel celebration continues on page 2

Tikkun Olam with Ralph Lowenstein

By Dawn Burgess-Krop
JCNCF President

How does one condense the mitzvot of Dr. Ralph Lowenstein? One can only scratch the surface and start by expressing appreciation for his interesting monthly Chronicle column, “Israel in Brief,” a sampler of current news from Israel.

Our Jewish community is also grateful for his dedication to expanding and beautifying our local Jewish cemetery, which Ralph’s research suggests is the oldest stand-alone Jewish cemetery in Florida.

Dr. Lowenstein served as Dean of the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida for 18 years. He is one of only two Jewish deans ever appointed at UF. He was a leader in the transition from print to digital media and led UF to be recognized as one of the top five schools of journalism in the country. During his tenure, he helped found WUFT-FM, an NPR station. As if that were not enough, he is the author or co-author of six books, including a novel about the Israel’s War of Independence.

Ralph grew up in Danville, Virginia, the youngest of three brothers, in a congregation of 25 Jewish families. He describes himself as having been “very lucky” and cites his goal orientation as a force behind his achievements. He became an Eagle Scout at age 15 and went on to attend Columbia University.

Lowenstein continues on page 4
Israeli Independence Day Celebration Set for Sunday, May 15

Join us from 11 am to 1 pm to sample food trucks and local craft beer while enjoying music by the Klezmer Katz. Children can play in TWO bounce houses, get their faces painted by Fabulous Faces Entertainment or play games and do arts and crafts. There will be a Yom HaZikaron Memorial Service at 11:30 am and Captain Character will perform a magic and puppet show at 12 noon.

A new twist to this year’s event is the addition of food trucks. Scheduled to appear at the celebration are:

- Jordan Glen School and Summer Camp
  12425 SW 154th Street
  Archer, FL 32618

Soup to Nuts and Leapin’ Lizard’s Delicious Bites. All food trucks will serve vegetarian options and will sell their items directly to guests.

Admission to this year’s event will be $7 for adults, $5 for children 4 and older and free for children 3 and under. Families may attend for a special rate of $25.

For more information about the event, to volunteer or to RSVP, please contact JCNCF at 352.371.3846 or office@jcncf.org. We look forward to celebrating with you!
On Wednesday, March 30, it was standing room only as 130 people packed the Oak Room at Oak Hammock to hear the Oak Hammock Singers perform selected songs from *Fiddler on the Roof*. The chorus provided a Power Point display of the words from *Fiddler* that led the audience in singing along. Soloists filled in some parts, the chorus sang others, and the audience was invited to share much of that music as the group made their way through the story. Songs included “Fiddler on the Roof,” “If I Were a Rich Man,” “Tradition,” “Sabbath Prayer,” and “Sunrise, Sunset.”

The project started as an idea for an event during the Gainesville Jewish Film Festival and morphed into the program that occurred during a brainstorming session between JCNCF staff, Virginia Brissette Hirshik and Tamara Segal and Oak Hammock Director of Community Services, Katherine Osman. The group sent the idea to University of Florida School of Music professors, and husband and wife duo, Ron Burrichter and Dr. Brenda Smith who have worked together at Oak Hammock as consultants and currently as directors of the Oak Hammock Singers since the beginning, 11 years ago. Guests who attended sang along with great enthusiasm and many asked about what the next collaboration would be.

On the fourth Thursday of every month, volunteers coordinated by the Jewish Council of North Central Florida serve a meal to 40 or more homeless and/or hungry women at the Helping Hands Clinic, which is an ongoing project of the First United Methodist Church.

The clinic’s volunteer health professionals and students have provided free healthcare for Gainesville’s vulnerable men and women since October, 1989. Clients have access to a safe place to shower, food, clothing and basic medical care. The clinic is staffed by social workers, registered nurses, advanced registered nurse practitioners, physicians, and community service volunteers. Over the years, there have been 18,500 clinic visits with over 4,700 individuals seeking care. More than half those served are homeless, ranging from months to decades on the streets.

Since adopting the Helping Hands Clinic as an ongoing mitzvah project several years ago, the Jewish Council has partnered with Congregation B’nai Israel, Temple Shir Shalom and others to provide food, toiletries, clothing and other essentials. Over the last year, classes from the B’nai Israel Community Day School have rotated that responsibility.

This past April, the Social Action Committee from Temple Shir Shalom sponsored the meal. Many thanks go to volunteers Adela Beckerman, Elaine Jacobson, Randy Kraft, Amy Melker, Myrna Neims, Nancy Parks, Kara Sair, and Marcia Storch.

The clinic always needs donations of toiletries, batteries, toilet, tissue and general paper products, and tarps. For information on how to donate these items or to get involved with this project, please contact JCNCF at office@jcncf.org or 352.371.3846.
While an 18-year-old college sophomore and exchange student in England, Ralph went to Paris and volunteered for the Israeli army. While living with false papers in a displaced persons camp in Marseilles, he made his way to Israel on a ship for displaced persons and was smuggled into Israel. Ten days after his arrival, he saw combat in Israel’s War of Independence while serving as a halftrack driver with the 79th Armored Battalion. In October 1948, this unit secured the North Central Galilee for Israel by defeating forces from Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria.

Upon returning to the United States, Ralph completed his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Columbia and then served in the U.S. army for two years during the Korean War. He jokes that he is likely the only soldier who served in two armies without ever having to undergo basic training. In Israel, his driver’s license immediately won him his position as driver, while his typing skills resulted in being quickly made a supply clerk in the U.S. army.

Ralph went on to work as a newspaper reporter for the El Paso Times and wrote a significant series of stories that effected major changes in immigration and naturalization policy, not only reuniting families separated by the U.S.–Mexico border, but also influencing policy for opening the path for refugees from Central Europe.

Upon completing his Ph.D. at the University of Missouri, Ralph took his family to Israel and served there as a visiting professor. Upon his return to the University of Missouri to join its faculty, he established a program for graduate students to study in Israel.

From teaching Sunday school as a youth to his five terms as president of the Gainesville Jewish Appeal (which evolved into JCNCF), the common threads in Ralph’s many accomplishments and honors are his devotion to supporting and sustaining Israel, promoting Jewish causes, and advancing his profession of journalism. His dedication has earned many awards and honors, from a Freedom Forum Journalism Administrator of the Year to the American Jewish Historical Society’s “Emma Lazarus Statue of Liberty Award,” which recognizes outstanding commitment and leadership in strengthening the American Jewish community.

No story about Ralph is complete without an account of how he met his wife of 61 years, the former Bronia Levenson. While on a double date with Bronia’s cousin, Ralph became smitten with Bronia, but could never get her alone to learn her last name. Only knowing that she lived in the tiny town of Mesa, New Mexico, and armed with a map, Ralph set out to find his beloved. With no information, he drove slowly through the one-street town without seeing a soul. He drove up and down the main street three times in what seemed a futile quest and was ready to declare defeat when he saw a car coming from the opposite direction. It was Bronia with a girlfriend, and Bronia recognized his car! When asked by her friend who Ralph was, Bronia replied, “He wasn’t my date, but I met the man I’m going to marry.” Sixty-three years later, Bronia and Ralph have a son in Gainesville, a daughter in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and six grandsons.

While it’s a worn cliché to say “The rest is history,” our entire community is grateful that Ralph and Bronia’s path brought them to Gainesville. Their contributions have enriched our community and their kindness, service, and friendship are the model of tikkun olam.
Israel in Brief: News and Developments

By Ralph Lowenstein

**Christians in Israel.** Facing severe persecution in almost every country in the Middle East, Christians are rapidly declining in numbers everywhere except in Israel. A Maronite Christian, Salim Joubran, is a judge on Israel’s Supreme Court. Some 30% of Arab-Israeli Christians of military age volunteer to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

**Palestinian Textbooks Examined.** The Mideast Freedom Forum, a German think tank, recently published research on the content of school textbooks published by the Palestinian Authority. The word Israel does not appear on maps. That word is replaced by Occupation Regime or Zionist Terrorist Organization. Tel Aviv and Haifa are referred to as Settlements.

**Arabic Compulsory.** Recently, the Knesset voted unanimously to make Arabic compulsory in all Israeli schools, starting in the first grade.

**First Ethiopian Brigade Commander.** Lt. Col. Avi Yitzchak became the first Ethiopian Jew to graduate from the IDF brigade commanders course. He immigrated to Israel when he was 19 and, after graduating from medical school, served as a combat doctor. He now heads the Combat Medical Branch in the IDF’s Medical Corps.

**Israeli Economy in 2015.** The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the Israeli economy grew by only 2.5% in 2015, the lowest in six years. However, at the same time, the acceleration in growth of offshore gas fields created a record balance of $13.8 billion in Israel’s current balance of payments.

**A Date to Remember.** Israel is the major exporter in the world of the large, soft, and relatively expensive Medjool date. Israel produces 75% of the world production of the Medjool, which is grown in the Jordan Valley and Arava desert.

**Jerusalem Mayor Answers Disrupters.** After dozens of pro-Palestinian protestors at San Francisco State University attempted unsuccessfully to disrupt a recent speech by Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, the mayor responded, “Anyone who thinks that calls for violence and incitement will be able to silence us or divert us from our position is mistaken. We will continue to build, develop, and strengthen the State of Israel and within it a united Jerusalem.”

**Palestinians Seek Conditions for Talks.** Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has once again invited Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to restart the peace talks without prior conditions. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat responded that, for the meeting to be held, “Netanyahu must first announce an end to settlement building, release prisoners arrested before the signing of the Oslo peace accords in 1993, and recognize all the signed peace treaties between the two sides.”

**Book for Military, Political Buffs.** The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War, authored by Ami Gluska, examines how really close Israel came to a military coup as Prime Minister Levi Eshkol risked Israel’s element of surprise through delays in giving the order to attack Egypt in 1967. Published nine years ago, this is a “must” book for those interested in both Israel’s military and politics.

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PJ Library Family Spotlight with the Sager-Browns

By Debby Kinman-Ford
PJ Library Co-coordinator

Meet the Sager-Brown family! They are this month’s PJ Library Spotlight Family.

The Sager-Browns - Jennifer, Chris, Veronica, and Rebekah, ages 9 and 7—have been active in PJ Library for several years. Jennifer graduated from UF, returned to Gainesville in 2001 after completing her Ph.D., and met her husband, Chris, at a wedding. They were married in Gainesville in 2004 in the middle of a hurricane.

One standout book from PJ Library that they especially enjoy—*Something from Nothing* by Phoebe Gilman—remains a family favorite. When they aren’t reading PJ Library books, the Sager-Browns enjoy doing science projects, painting, swimming, computer coding, and napping (‘cause all those things can tire you out!).

We are so happy to recognize the Sager-Brown family as May’s PJ Library Spotlight Family!

Jennifer and Chris also love volunteering with their girls at JCNCF’s Mitzvah Day. Over the years that the community-wide event has been held, they have enjoyed making cards and placemats and putting together snack packs. Jennifer says, “We were delighted to have the opportunity to teach our kids the importance of caring for others and how to help make things better in the world.”
Searching for Passover with PJ Library Gainesville

By William Alford
JCNCF Intern

On Sunday, April 10, PJ Library families turned out with smiles and thinking caps on for the Searching for Passover Scavenger Hunt at the Florida Museum of Natural History. Kids, parents and siblings, from little ones in strollers to big brothers recently Bar’ Mitzvahed, worked together to find all ten exhibits that helped tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Families from as far away as Ocala attended and spend a beautiful spring afternoon together as a community. All the children went home with bags of Passover snacks and Passover themed goodies, but most important, memories of time spent with friends and family having fun and learning about being Jewish!
B’nai Israel Community Day School News

By Debby Kinman-Ford, B’nai Israel Community Day School Director

How can it already be May? As we start to wind down the school year at B’nai Israel Community Day School, our students and faculty begin reflecting on what we have learned and accomplished this year. In early childhood, every year is marked by major developmental milestones—children learn to walk, talk, argue, use the potty, and so on. They learn their numbers, colors, shapes, and sounds in English and Hebrew and about our chickens, growing vegetables, and taking care of the Earth. We get to experience all of those things and more. Each milestone is cause for a celebration of growth and independence (even the arguing!).

Beyond those wonderful memories, we also reflect on how we have worked together to make our larger community better. This year, our Community Committee, headed by five staff, has spearheaded several projects that staff, students, and families have participated in.

We have continued our partnership with Meridian Behavioral Healthcare by hosting a baby shower fundraiser for the MIST moms as well as a makeover of their common area and nursery spaces. We have continued to make birthdays-in-a-box for Ronald McDonald House and for Arbor House, the homeless family shelter.

We have sold pinwheels for Child Abuse Prevention Month with the proceeds benefiting the Child Advocacy Center and have donated money to both Helping Hands Pet Rescue and the Taste of Gainesville event, thereby benefiting Tyler’s Hope, PACE Center for Girls, Child Advocacy Center, and Ronald McDonald House. We have walked a Sunday marathon for March of Dimes, and we hosted the Life South bloodmobile in February with plans to do it again in May.

At B’nai Israel Community Day School, we are committed to help educate the next generation of children to be smart, inquisitive, and actively involved in making the world a better place.

Expansion of Oldest Jewish Cemetery in Florida Proceeds

By Ralph Lowenstein

The Cemetery Committee of Congregation B’nai Israel has reported that its eight-month campaign to raise $250,000 for the expansion and beautification of B’nai Israel Cemetery, at the convergence of Williston Road, Waldo Road, and East University Avenue, exceeded its goal, with $295,530 contributed and pledged. Some 112 families contributed to the campaign.

The $120,000 loan has already been repaid in full, and the $32,000 borrowed from other sources will also be repaid shortly. Most of the remainder will be used to develop the newly acquired piece of land into a future burial area. Ralph Lowenstein, chair of the committee, said a substantial amount of money also will be directed toward beautifying the original part of the cemetery, established in 1871.

The building on the land acquired has already been razed. Most of the development and beautification planned for the cemetery will be completed by the end of 2018, according to Dr. Lowenstein.
Transitions: Community Life Events

Do you have a life cycle event you would like to share with our JCNCF community? Please submit items to chronicle@jcncf.org. Submissions may be edited as space allows. Pictures are welcome and encouraged! Transitions may include birth, engagement and wedding announcements, bat and bar mitzvah, graduations, promotions and honors, and memorials.

In Memoriam
Our community mourns the passing of these beloved friends and family members:
Raye Budd Cyprys &
Dr. Herb Oberlander
May their loved ones find solace in their memory.

Mazel tov to Susan Johns (shown above), daughter of JCNCF board member Helene Johns and sister of Kevin Johns. Susan is graduating from the University of Florida Levin College of Law in May. Upon graduation, she will work in the litigation department of a large law firm in Orlando.

Mazel Tov to Anthony Lyons, who was recently appointed as Gainesville City Manager, as well as Director of the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Authority, a position he has held for 8 years.

Mazel tov to Kevin Johns (shown above), brother of Susan Johns and son of Helen Johns. Kevin graduates from Oak Hall and will become an official Gator. He joins the University of Florida Honors Program this fall, class of 2020. The Johns family is filled with graduation simchas.

Mazel Tov to Holly & Daniel Singer.
Holly Lynn Gershow, daughter of Jim and Ellen Gershow, and Daniel Singer, son of Gil and Betsy Singer of Tampa, were married on February 14, 2016, under a chuppah on the 18th green at Palma Ceia Country Club in Tampa. Dinner and dancing in the ballroom followed.

Officiant Rabbi Richard Birnholz of Congregation Schaarai Zedek in Tampa had served as associate rabbi with Daniel’s grandfather, Rabbi Frank Sundheim, of blessed memory.

Daniel Singer, groom, with Holly Lynn Gershow, bride, celebrating their union on a beautiful day in Tampa

Holly and Daniel are both sports fans and met during a rain delay at a Tampa Bay Buccaneers game. Daniel was at the game with a group of buddies and Holly was there with friends from the Jewish Federation’s Young Adult Division. A long time friend of Dan’s introduced them.

Daniel is Vice President of Finance for Fair Warning, which provides managed services for patient privacy intelligence. Holly is an Assistant U.S. Attorney.

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North Central Florida Congregations & Organizations

Gainesville

B’nai Israel Community Day School (DS)
Debby Kinman-Ford, Director
www.bnaiisraelcds.org
352.376.1508, ext 101

Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Florida (CJS)
Dr. Jack Kugelmass, Director
Sandra James, Office Assistant
web.jst.ufl.edu
PO Box 118020, Gainesville, FL 32611
352.392.9247

Congregation B’nai Israel (CBI)
Rabbi David Kaiman
Jenifer Petrescu, Executive Director
Suzanne Chester, Chavaya (Religious Education) Director
Stephanie Savage, Programs
www.bnaigainesville.com
3830 NW 16th Blvd, Gainesville, FL 32605
352.376.1508

Gainesville Chapter of Hadassah (HAD)
Meredith Bacharach, President
mwbacharach@gmail.com
352.256.7631

Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica at the University of Florida (LIB)
Dr. Rebecca Jefferson, Director
cms.uflib.ufl.edu/Judaica/Index.aspx
George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611
352.273.2865

The Tabacinic Lubavitch-Chabad Jewish Student & Community Center (LCJC)
Rabbi Berl & Chanie Goldman, Directors
Rabbi Aharon Chaim & Pessie Notik, Co-Directors
www.jewishgator.com
2021 NW 5th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32603
352.336.5877

Temple Shir Shalom (TSS)
Rabbi Michael Joseph
Debbie Boada, Religious School Principal
Ann Eisenstadt, Office Manager
www.shirshalom.net
3855 NW 8th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32605
352.371.6399

UF Hillel (HLL)
Rabbi Adam Grossman
www.ufhillel.org
2020 W University Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32603
352.372.2900

Ocala and Surrounding Locations

Chabad Lubavitch Jewish Center of Marion County & The Villages (CLJC)
Rabbi Yossi & Chanie Hecht, Directors
www.jewishmarion.org
3500 SW 34th Avenue Circle, 34474
352.291.2218

Congregation Beth Israel (CBI-O)
Rabbi Karen Allen
www.bethisraelocala.org
7171 SW Hwy 200, 34476
352.450.2056

Congregation Beth Sholom (CBS)
Hazzan Mordecai Kamlot
www.bethsholomcitrus.org
102 Civic Circle
Beverly Hills, FL 34464
352.746.5303

Temple Beth Shalom (TBS)
Rabbi Ze’ev Harari
www.jewishocala.com
1109 NE 8th Avenue, 34470
352.629.5837

Temple B’nai Darom (TBD)
Rabbi Harold Jaye
www.facebook.com/ TempleBnaiDarom
49 Banyan Course, 34472
352.624.0380

Temple Shalom of Central Florida (TSCF)
Sheldon Skurow, Spiritual Leader
www.templeshalomcentralfl.org
13563 County Road 101, Oxford, FL 34484
352.748.1800

The Jewish Council thanks Jordan Glen School & Summer Camp for hosting our annual community Israeli Independence Day Celebration on Sunday, May 15. Jordan Glen School & Summer Camp provides creative educational and camp experiences in a beautiful, rustic setting for children pre-K through 8th grade.
Jewish Community Calendar for May 2016

Sunday, May 1
✦ Yom HaShoah: The JCNCF Holocaust Remembrance Event featuring Samuel Kassow, 7pm at CBI

Monday, May 2
✦ CBI Israeli Folk Dancing, 7:15 pm

Tuesday, May 3
✦ TSS Torah Study with Rabbi Joseph, 9:30 am
✦ CBI Torah on Tuesday with Rabbi Kaiman, 12 pm

Wednesday, May 4
✦ CBI Friendship Circle, 10:30 am
✦ CBI Yoga with Chaya, 5:30 pm
✦ CBI Hebrew Class, 6:30 pm
✦ JCNCF Caregivers Support Group, 7 pm. For location and more information, please contact Lori Waxenberg at loribwax@gmail.com.

Thursday, May 5 ~ Yom HaShoah

Friday, May 6
✦ CBI Yiddish class, 9:30 am

Sunday, May 8 Mother’s Day
✦ CBI New Moon Yoga with Erin, 6pm

Monday, May 9
✦ CBI Israeli Folk Dancing, 7:15 pm

Tuesday, May 10
✦ TSS Torah Study with Rabbi Joseph, 9:30 am
✦ CBI Torah on Tuesday with Rabbi Kaiman, 12 pm

Wednesday, May 11 ~ Yom HaZikaron
✦ CBI Friendship Circle, 10:30 am
✦ CBI Yoga with Chaya, 5:30 pm
✦ CBI Hebrew Class, 6:30 pm
✦ Hadassah Book Club at CBI, 7 pm. The group will discuss “The Nightingale” by Kristen Hannah.

Thursday, May 12 ~ Yom HaAtzmaut

Friday, May 13
✦ CBI Yiddish class, 9:30 am

Sunday, May 15
✦ TSS Congregation Annual Meeting & Brunch, 9 am
✦ JCNCF Israeli Independence Day Celebration at Jordan Glen School and Summer Camp in Archer from 11 am - 1 pm

Monday, May 16
✦ CBI Israeli Folk Dancing, 7:15 pm

Tuesday, May 17
✦ TSS Torah Study with Rabbi Joseph, 9:30 am
✦ CBI Torah on Tuesday with Rabbi Kaiman, 12 pm

Wednesday, May 18
✦ CBI Friendship Circle, 10:30 am
✦ CBI Yoga with Chaya, 5:30 pm
✦ CBI Hebrew class, 6:30 pm

Friday, May 20
✦ CBI Yiddish class, 9:30 am

Saturday, May 21
✦ CBI Baby Musica with Karen Cohen, 11 am

Sunday, May 22
✦ CBI Congregation Annual Meeting, 9 am

Monday, May 23
✦ CBI Israeli Folk Dancing, 7:15 pm

Tuesday, May 24
✦ TSS Last Torah Study with Rabbi Joseph, 9:30 am
✦ CBI Torah on Tuesday with Rabbi Kaiman, 12 pm

Wednesday, May 25
✦ CBI Friendship Circle (last day) 10:30 am
✦ CBI Yoga with Chaya, 5:30 pm
✦ CBI Hebrew class, 6:30 pm

Thursday, May 26
✦ Helping Hands Clinic, 2:30 pm at the First United Methodist Church

Friday, May 27
✦ CBI Yiddish class, 9:30 am

Monday, May 30 ~ Memorial Day

Tuesday, May 31
✦ CBI Torah on Tuesday with Rabbi Kaiman, 12 pm
Save These Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>JCNCF PROGRAMS &amp; EVENTS</th>
<th>WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, May 1, 7 pm</td>
<td>Yom HaShoah Remembrance Event</td>
<td>Congregation B’nai Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, May 15, 11 am - 1 pm</td>
<td>Israeli Independence Day Celebration</td>
<td>Jordan Glen School in Archer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 26, 2:30 pm</td>
<td>Helping Hands Clinic</td>
<td>First United Methodist Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highlights from This Issue

- Israeli Independence Celebration: page 1
- Ralph Lowenstein Profile: page 1
- Israeli Independence continued: page 2
- JCNCF in the Community: page 3
- Lowenstein Profile continued: page 4
- Israel in Brief: page 5
- PJ Library Spotlight on the Sager-Browns: page 6
- PJ Library Searching for Passover Recap: page 7
- B’nai Israel Community News: page 8
- Transitions: page 9
- Community Directory: page 10
- Events Calendar for May: page 11